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ABSTRACT

This paper describes a study which compared teachers' actual and ideal perceptions of principals' interpersonal behavior. The instrument developed, the Principal Interaction Questionnaire (PIQ), for the study was based on the Questionnaire on Teacher Interaction, which was first devised in the Netherlands and contains eight scales that measure different facets of interpersonal behavior. The questionnaire was sent to 56 schools throughout Australia where it was completed by the principal and a random sample of 20 teachers in each school. In addition to rigorous analysis of the data, the study also used interviews to expand the qualitative aspect in an attempt to find out more about the schools involved and to draw a broader picture. This is also in keeping with current approaches to learning environment research. This paper reports on interviews at three of these schools. Results indicate that the PIQ was able to describe, fairly accurately, the interpersonal behavior of the principal as perceived by teachers in the school. (Contains 18 figures and 14 references.) (SLD)

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ED 419 847

A QUALITATIVE DESCRIPTION OF TEACHERS' AND PRINCIPALS' PERCEPTIONS OF INTERPERSONAL BEHAVIOR AND SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

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Paper presented at the 1998 Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association at San Diego, April 13-17, 1998.

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The nature of perceived school environments has been the focus of a number of research studies in recent years. It has been found that there are significant relationships between principals' interpersonal behavior and school environment. (Cresswell & Fisher, 1996). This paper describes a study which, when studying school environment, compared teachers' actual and ideal perceptions of principals' interpersonal behavior. The instrument developed (the Principal Interaction Questionnaire - PIQ) for the study was based on the Questionnaire on Teacher Interaction, which was first devised in The Netherlands and contained eight scales, which measured different facets of interpersonal behavior. The questionnaire was sent to 56 schools throughout Australia where it was completed by the principal and a random sample of 20 teachers in each school. In addition to a rigorous statistical analysis of the data, the study also employed interviews to expand the qualitative aspect in an attempt to find out more about the schools involved and to draw a broader picture. This is also in keeping with current approaches to learning environment research (Fraser & Tobin, 1991, p. 290). This paper reports on three of those interviews.

Introduction

That positive school environment is linked to student achievement has been written in educational literature over a number of years. Hughes (1991, p. 62) wrote that every school has a pervasive climate which has an influence on the behavior of teachers and students to succeed in teaching and learning. The assertion is that if teachers have a supportive and conducive working environment then better student achievement will be the result. Purkey and Smith (1982) concluded that research is persuasive in suggesting that student performance is strongly affected by school culture, which is, in turn, related to the school environment. Cresswell and Fisher (1996, p.29) found that there were significant relationships between school environment and principals' interpersonal behavior.

The Questionnaire on Teacher Interaction (QTI)

In the Netherlands, Wubbels, Creton, and Hooymayers (1990) investigated teacher interpersonal behavior in classrooms from a systems perspective, adapting a theory on communication processes developed by Watzlawick, Beavin and Jackson (1967). Within the systems perspective of communication, it is assumed that the behaviors of participants influence each other mutually. The behavior of the teacher is influenced by the behavior of the students and in turn influences student behavior. Circular communication processes develop which not only consist of behavior, but determine behavior as well.

With the systems perspective in mind, Wubbels, Creton and Hooymayers (1990) developed the Questionnaire on Teacher Interaction (QTI). The QTI is a free-choice high-inference inventory employing five-point numerical Likert rating scales. Based on a circumplex model proposed by Leary (1957), its eight scales are symmetrically arrayed around orthogonal axes representing an Influence dimension (Dominance - D; Submission - S) and a Proximity dimension (Co-operation - C; Opposition - O). Wubbels, Creton and Hooymayers (1990) believed all teachers interactional behaviors can be plotted in this system of coordinates. The quadrants resulting form these axes were subdivided into equal sized octants. The sectors were labelled DC, CD etc. according to their position in the coordinate system, the letters coding the relative influence of the axes (see Figure 1). For example, sectors DC and CD are both characterised by Dominance and Cooperation, but in DC, Dominance predominates over Cooperation, whereas in CD, Cooperation is more evident. The closer the sectors are to each

other, the more closely they resemble each other and the more they represent similar teacher behaviors.

The Australian version of the QTI (Wubbels, 1993) has 48 items, six for every sector of the model of interpersonal teacher behavior in Figure 1. The items are assigned to the eight scales of Leadership (DC), Helping/Friendly (CD), Understanding (CS), Student Responsibility and Freedom (SC), Uncertain (SO), Dissatisfaction (OS), Admonishing (OD) and Strict (DO) behavior. The instrument can be used as either a teacher self-report measure or as a measure of student perceptions (using the class as a unit of analysis) of teacher interpersonal behavior. Each item in the QTI is scored on a 5-point Likert scale. Aggregated class data is used to produce eight scale scores which together form a profile for the teacher. For ease of comprehension and comparison, the results can be represented visually in a characteristic "cob-web-like" figure where sectors are shaded according to the scale scores.

The reliability and validity of the QTI has been investigated in various countries, including The Netherlands, USA and Australia. Wubbels (1993), described an Australian study in which 792 students and their 46 teachers were involved from year 11 science and mathematics classes in Western Australia and Tasmania. The Cronbach alpha reliabilities ranged from .68 to .85. This is considered to indicate a satisfactory level of reliability (Nunnally, 1978). In the studies carried out in The Netherlands and the USA, Wubbels and Levy (1991) reported that seven of the eight measured reliabilities were in excess of .90.

The Questionnaire on Teacher Interaction has been used to plot profiles of various teacher behaviors and a teacher typology classification was developed (Brekelmans, Levy and Rodriguez, 1993, p. 49). There were eight teacher types described - Directive, Authoritative, Tolerant and Authoritative, Tolerant, Uncertain/Tolerant, Uncertain/Aggressive, Repressive and Drudging.

The QTI has also been used for the professional development of teachers (Fisher, Fraser and Cresswell, 1995). They described students' perceptions of their science teachers and found the typologies were different, for example, for a beginning teacher and one who had many years of experience. The beginning teacher had a higher level of uncertainty compared with the experienced teacher.

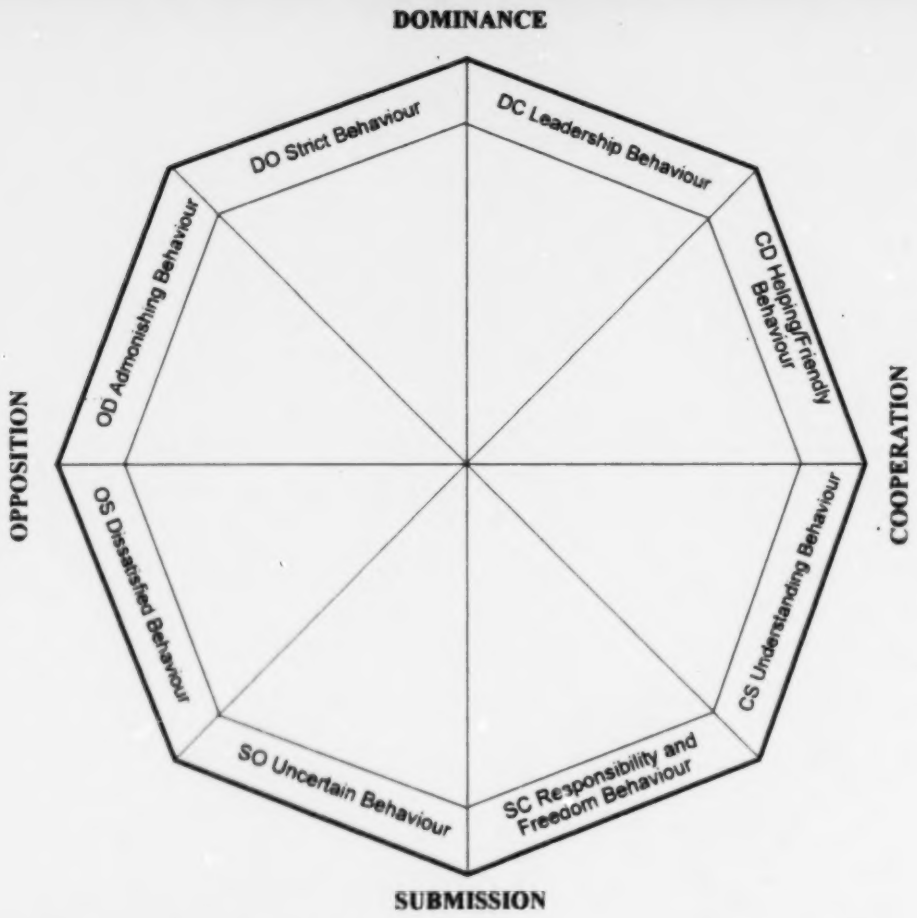

Figure 1. The Model For Interpersonal Teacher Behavior.

The Principal Interaction Questionnaire (PIQ)

An assumption underlying this study is that the theory underpinning the Questionnaire on Teacher Interaction to measure a *teacher's* interpersonal behavior with students could also hold true for measuring a *principal's* interpersonal style with teaching staff. In order to investigate the principal's interaction style with teaching staff, it was necessary to develop a new measuring instrument.

This had been done, originally, by Kremer-Hayon and Wubbels (1993, p. 113), who described the development of the Questionnaire on Principal Interaction (QPI) from the Questionnaire on Teacher Interaction. The original Dutch and American versions were translated into Hebrew. Some of the scales were also changed - for example Student Responsibility and Freedom became Giving Teacher Responsibility and Freedom, Admonishing behavior became Objecting. A 62 item questionnaire was the result and responses from 96 teachers in Israel, were correlated with a measure of teacher satisfaction. Kremer-Hayon and Wubbels (1993, p. 114), reported alpha reliability levels ranging from 0.69 to 0.86 for this modified version of the QTI.

Table 1
Description of Scales in the Principal Interaction Questionnaire (PIQ)

	Scale Name	Description of associated behaviours	Sample Item
DC	Directive Behaviour	Notices what's happening, leads, organises, gives orders, sets tasks, determines procedure, directs, explains, holds attention.	This Principal gives clear directions.
CD	Encouraging Behaviour	Assists, shows interest, joins, behaves in a friendly or considerate manner, able to make a joke, inspires confidence and trust.	This Principal takes a personal interest in teachers.
CS	Understanding Behaviour	Listens with interest, empathises, show s confidence and understanding, accepts apologies, looks for ways to settle differences, is patient, is open with teachers.	If teachers have something to say, this Principal will listen.
SC	Giving Independence Behaviour	Gives teachers opportunity to work independently, allow steachers time for professional development, gives freedom to choose teaching methods.	This Principal gives teachers the opportunity to develop their own courses.
SO	Uncertain Behaviour	Keeps a low profile, hesitant, timid, not sure what to do.	This Principal changes his/her mind.
OS	Disapproving Behaviour	Thinks teachers are not giving their best, criticises, questions, is suspicious.	This Principal puts teachers down.
OD	Aggressive Behaviour	Gets angry, looks down on the teachers, expresses irritation, punishes.	This Principal is impatient with the teachers at this school.
DO	Strict/ Inflexible Behaviour	Keeps reins tight, checks, judges, has strict adherence to rules and regulations, inflexible.	This Principal keeps a tight rein on teachers' activities at school.

It was decided to develop a new questionnaire, the Principal Interaction Questionnaire (PIQ), from the 48-item version of the QTI. A shorter version was seen as being more acceptable to those participating in the study. In designing the PIQ a number of criteria were seen as being desirable:

1. The questions should be designed to allow for a complete analysis of the eight sectors of the Leary Model.
2. The items should be written to focus on the interpersonal behavior of the principal - not a general questionnaire on the principal's leadership style.
3. Keeping in mind the time pressure that teachers work under, the questionnaire should be relatively economic in the number of items, so that it could be completed in one session of around twenty minutes.
4. It should be designed so that the principals can see the relevance to their own schools.

5. The format should be easy to handle without the constant need to be shuffling pages to find instructions.

The items, therefore, had to be developed from those in the QTI, in two significant ways. The first was to ensure that each item was appropriate to the context of a whole school, rather than the classroom. Secondly, items were also modified or replaced so that the behaviors that were not relevant to principals were excluded and others included to measure that particular scale.

The final version of the PIQ was composed of six items for each of the eight scales of interpersonal behavior being measured. The scales are described in Table 1. Possible responses for each item listed at the end of the item were, Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Always.

In the PIQ, the names of some of the scales were changed from those used in the QTI, to better describe the interpersonal behavior of principals, rather than teachers. For example, Admonishing became Aggressive, Dissatisfied became Disapproving, Student Responsibility and Freedom became Giving Independence, Strict became Strict/Inflexible, Helpful/Friendly became Encouraging. It was also thought that the word, Leadership, in this context, was too vague to describe any particular type of interpersonal behavior and so it was replaced with the word, Directive.

The results obtained from the PIQ can be plotted in a profile (as with the QTI) or on a simple linear profile (on which principals found it easier to observe comparisons). Some of the scale names from the QTI were changed in the PIQ - for example, Leadership behavior became Directive behavior.

School Level Environment Questionnaire

The instrument chosen to measure the environment of the school was the School Level Environment Questionnaire (SLEQ), Fisher & Fraser (1990). The SLEQ assesses important aspects of the school environment, such as relationships among teachers and between teachers and students and the organisational structure. To ensure validity of the instrument, extensive interviews were conducted with teachers to ensure that dimensions and individual items covered what teachers saw as salient, and that only material which was specifically relevant to the school was included. The result was an eight scale instrument with seven items per scale and validation data for the instrument have been published (Fisher and Fraser, 1990). The scales of the instrument are Student Support, Affiliation, Professional Interest, Mission Consensus, Empowerment, Innovation, Resource Adequacy and Work Pressure. The scales are described, in detail, in Table 2

Data Source

The two questionnaires (PIQ and SLEQ) were sent to 56 schools throughout Australia. In each of the schools the principal and 20 teachers were asked to complete the questionnaires. The staff were chosen randomly and confidentially completed the questionnaires. The final analysis was carried out on responses from 900 questionnaires. Each principal was given information about their own school but not about individual teachers. Detailed interviews were undertaken with some of the principals, three of which are reported in this paper. The principals were asked to comment on the profiles for their own school and were questioned about their views on school leadership, interpersonal behavior and school environment. They were also asked if their interpersonal style had changed during the time that they had been a principal and what use they could make of the results from the questionnaire. The schools

were chosen to give a variety of different types, single-sex, co-educational, government, non-government, male and female principals, and geographically diverse.

Table 2
Description of the Scales in the SLEQ

Scale Name	Description of scale	Sample Item	Moos's Category
Student Support (SS)	There is good rapport between teachers and students, students behave in a responsible self-disciplined manner.	There are many disruptive, difficult students in the school.(-)	Relationship
Affiliation (AF)	Teachers can obtain assistance, advice and encouragement, and are made to feel accepted by their colleagues.	I feel that I could rely on my colleagues for assistance if I should need it.(+)	Relationship
Professional Interest (PI)	Teachers discuss professional matters, show interest in their work and seek further professional development.	Teachers frequently discuss teaching methods and strategies with each other.(+)	Personal Development
Mission Consensus (MC)	Consensus exists within the staff about the goals of the school.	Teachers agree on the school's overall goals. (+)	System Maintenance and System Change
Empowerment (EM)	Teachers are empowered and encouraged to be involved in decision making processes.	Decisions about the running of this school are usually made by the principal or a small group of teachers. (-)	System Maintenance and System Change
Innovation (IN)	The school is in favour of planned change and experimentation, and fosters classroom openness and individualisation.	Teachers are encouraged to be innovative in this school.(+)	System Maintenance and System Change
Resource Adequacy (RA)	Support personnel, facilities, finance, equipment and resources are suitable and adequate.	The supply of equipment and resources is inadequate.(-)	System Maintenance and System Change
Work Pressure (WP)	The extent to which work pressures dominate school environment.	Teachers have to work long hours to keep up with the work load.(+)	System Maintenance and System Change

Results

There were four initial sets of results from the PIQ:

1. The teachers' actual perception of the principals in the sample.
2. The teachers' perception of preferred principal interpersonal behavior.

3. The principals' actual perception of principals (a self assessment)
4. The principals' perception of preferred principal interpersonal behavior.

In the initial analysis the results of all the schools were combined, rather than being treated individually, to allow for a full and accurate analysis of the questionnaire's statistical properties - individual teachers were used as the unit of analysis. The results indicated that the PIQ was a valid and reliable instrument to measure teachers' perceptions of the interpersonal behavior of the principals in the sample (Cresswell & Fisher, 1996). In subsequent analysis the individual schools were used as units of analysis.

School X

School X is an all girls school of about 550 students. The principal is female and has been in the position for six years. Prior to that she held a senior position at School X and had taught at other schools. The profile of the principal's interpersonal behavior (Figure 2) shows a very high degree of cooperative interpersonal behavior - the highest in the total sample used in the study.

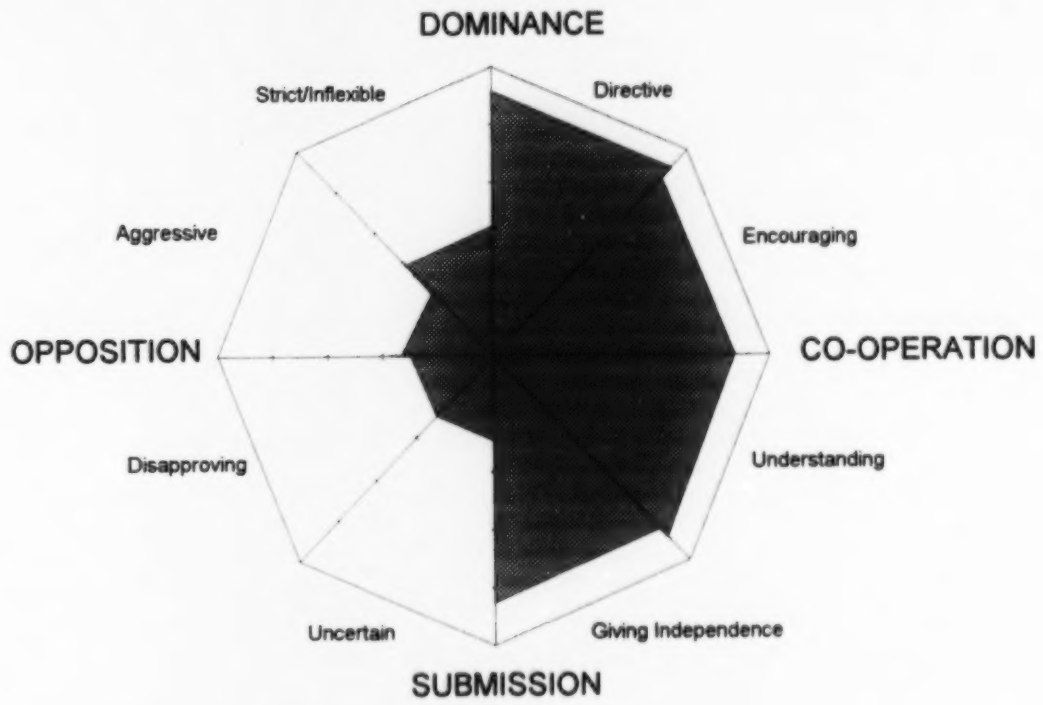

Figure 2. Teachers' actual perceptions of the principal of School X.

When asked about this high level of cooperative behavior, the principal said, "I try to be the kind of principal that I could work for", and preferred to be regarded, "more as a colleague than as a boss". To facilitate this and to encourage good communication, she always attended morning tea with staff, and seemed to be regarded as a member of the team, rather than being regarded as a separate leader.

When comparing the results of the principal of School X with the average for the study (Figure 3), it can be seen that all the cooperative scales (Directive, Encouraging, Understanding and Giving Independence) are much higher.

There are also very low levels of opposing interpersonal behaviors for this principal. She aimed to create a non-threatening atmosphere, believing that people don't accept change because they are threatened, although some "discomfort" is needed with the existing state of things to bring about change. She also said that too much discomfort will cause people to resist change altogether and to keep doing the things that they are doing because they feel safe. Her cooperative, accommodating interpersonal behavior can be summed up with her statement:

> It is a very wide highway that we walk down together and so there is room for a variety of approaches. We are all travelling in the same direction, each one of us is an equally valid partner.

The school had a relatively "flat" administrative structure to achieve its goals - a management team made up of the heads of schools, the head of boarding, business manager, development manager and the principal.

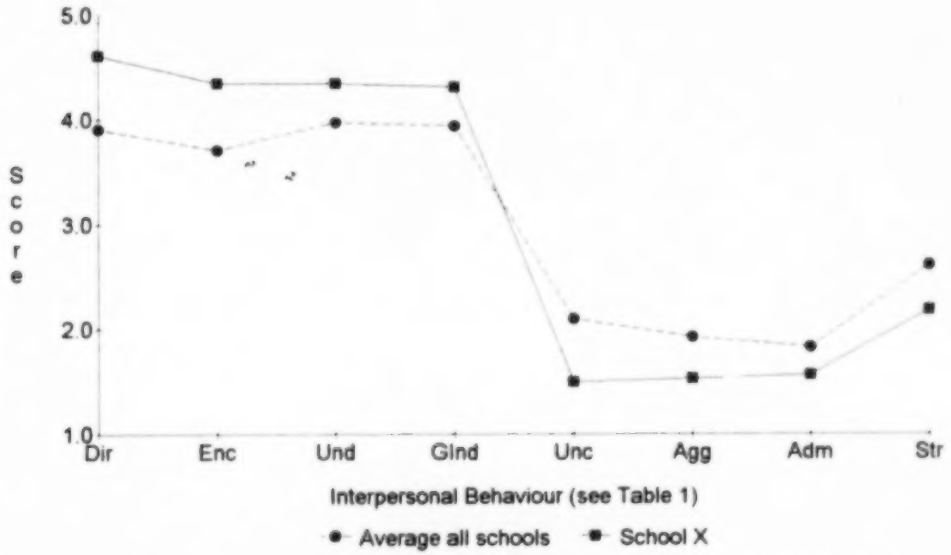

Figure 3. A comparison of teachers' actual perceptions of the principal of School X and the average perceptions of all principals in the study.

The teachers at School X perceive the principal to have a low degree of uncertain behavior. Although the principal believed that she did have some uncertainty, she thought that it was best not to communicate this uncertainty to the teachers. She said that she had worked under an uncertain principal, in the past, and felt uncomfortable with the continual changing of opinion and vacillating. As a principal herself, she would rather make a decision after consultation and, if necessary, change later if a mistake had been made.

The principal also scored highly in Encouragement interpersonal behavior. Generally, she believed that most people are doing the best that they can in their chosen occupation. If there was a need for improvement, then she saw it as her task to encourage and assist not to criticise and admonish. She said it was important that the needed change was recognised by the teacher and seen as being achievable.

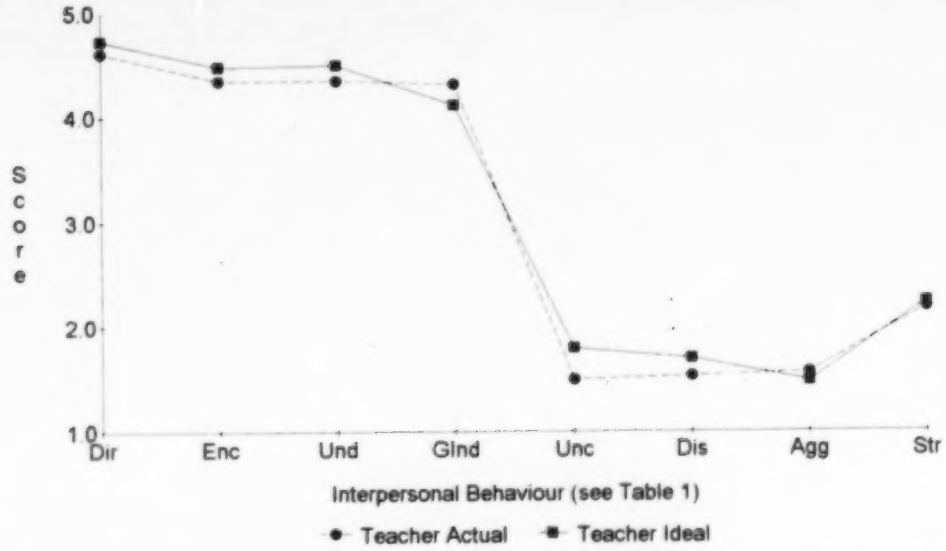

Figure 4. A comparison of teachers' actual perceptions of the principal of School X and their perceptions of an ideal principal.

When compared with the ideal principal, as perceived by the teachers at School X, there were only minor differences between the actual and the ideal. It would seem, therefore that the teachers were satisfied with this principal's interpersonal behavior. Although she said that she doesn't feel like a "boss", recent negotiations regarding salary could have caused a change in this perceptions. The final compromise was a state wide agreement, which she said was imposed from outside the school. She expressed concern about the next round of negotiations, which will be site-specific, and may change the relationship between herself and the teachers.

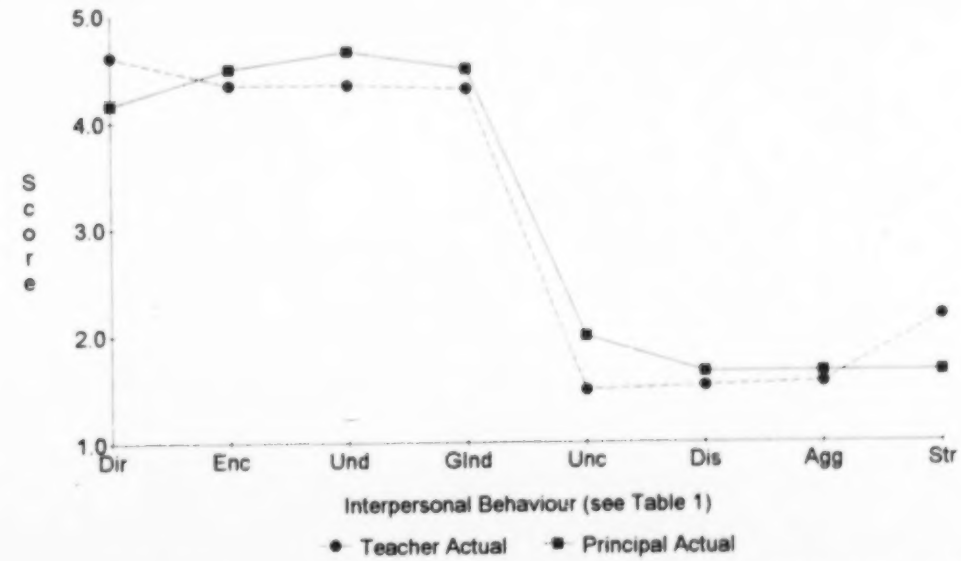

Figure 5. A comparison of teachers' actual perceptions of the principal of School X and the principal's self-appraisal.

The principal's self appraisal (Figure 5) shows general agreement with the perceptions of the teachers. The only variations of note, are that the principal sees herself as being more uncertain than the staff do and she also sees herself as exhibiting less directive leadership behavior than the staff perceive, "I'm surprised that they think I provide so much leadership", she said. The staff saw her as being more strict/inflexible than she believed herself to be. She perceived strict/inflexible more in the sense of consistency and was not surprised at their perceptions.

The comparison of the school environment of School X with the mean perceptions of all school environments in the study (Figure 6), shows that School X has much higher values on all SLEQ scales, except Work Pressure, which was less.

The high Student Support and Affiliation means were verified by the principal who said that the students generally get on well with each other and that there was a feeling that "we are all in this together", which was highlighted at assemblies and through newsletters. She believed that she communicated the feeling that people are equally valuable (including staff and students) and even though it was easy to be seen to value the high achievers in the student body, it was also necessary for the others to feel valued too.

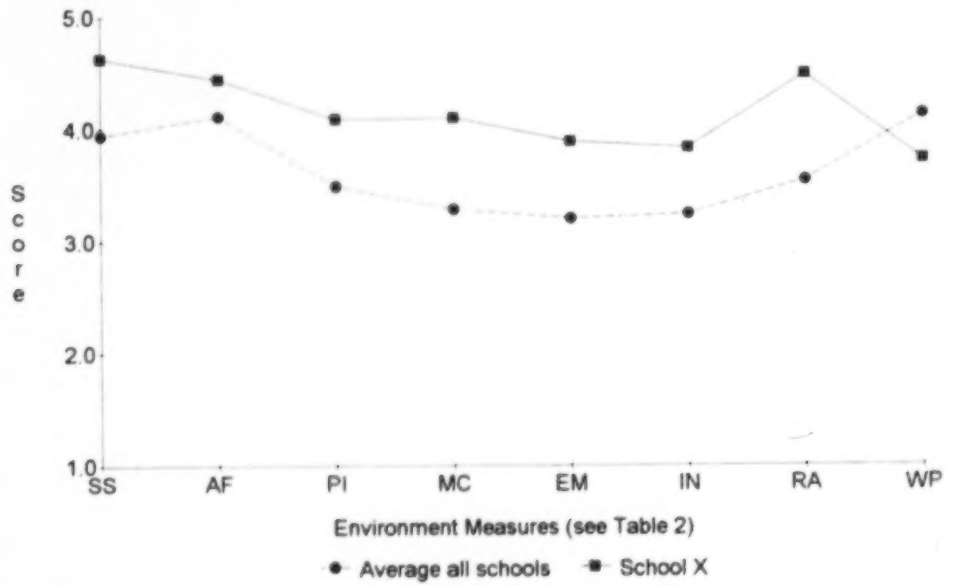

Figure 6. A comparison of teachers' perceptions of the actual school environment of School X and the average perceptions of all school environments in the study.

The values for Affiliation and Professional Interest were higher than the sample average. The principal noticed that the nature of discussion in the staffroom at this school was different to the nature of discussion in her previous schools, where the talk was often centred around policies, courses and curriculum. At her current school the discussion was much more to do with individual students - their successes and their problems. There was a high level of staff involvement in student welfare.

> As an institution, we are not about power and authority, we are about influence, collegiality and community.

The mean score for Mission Consensus was high and although the school had been through a strategic planning process, the principal thought that the high level of agreement amongst the, predominantly female, staff "had a lot to do with being a girls' school and what it is to be a woman in this day and age." "United in the aims, comes from discussion of both philosophical and practical matters." She said that the staff were united in their belief that helping the girls to become assertive young women who feel comfortable with themselves would assist those girls to make the right choices in life.

> What's really important is that what is practised is always consistent with philosophical belief. Students learn to make choices by making choices. They shouldn't be punished for making a bad choice, they will only hide the choice from you or not take any risks at all.

The level of Innovation at School X was higher than the sample average. The principal said that the staff were given encouragement to be innovative risk takers, although she was wary of continual change, especially that imposed from outside the school - from assessment boards, for example. The Work Pressure was lower at School X than the sample average, although the principal said that at certain times, such as report writing times, teachers were under a great deal of pressure. The principal also said that being a teacher herself meant that she was in tune with the cycle of events that took place in the school and, therefore, was able to make changes to reduce stress levels. To stay in touch with the staff and to gain an idea of the way that they perceive her, at the end of each year she asks them three questions on a simple questionnaire. She asks them what they would like her to stop doing (e.g., sometimes they suggest personal things like stop smoking), what they would like her to start doing (e.g., visit classrooms) and what they would like her to keep doing (e.g., maintain an open approach).

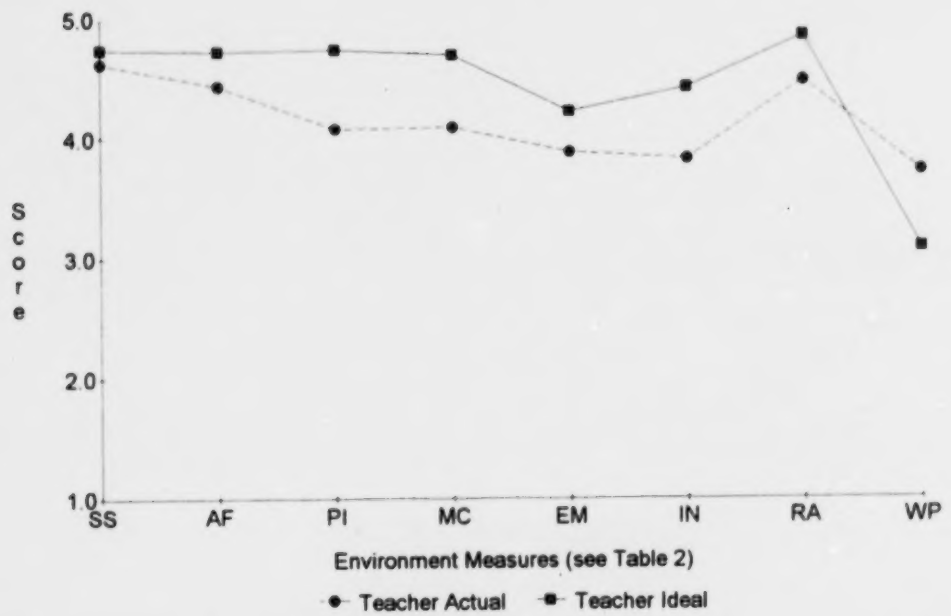

Figure 7. A comparison of teachers' perceptions of the actual school environment of School X and their perceptions of an ideal school environment.

When comparing School X's school environment measures to the average for all schools, the results show higher readings in all areas except the Work Pressure scale where they perceive their school to have less work pressure than the average for all schools. The comparison of teacher ideal and actual shows that the staff have scored very high on the ideal, even though the school was well above the average for all schools.

In summary, it would appear that the staff of School X have a positive view of both the principal's interpersonal style and the school level environment.

School Y

School Y is a coeducational secondary school with a student population of 1400. The male principal had been in his current position for nearly a year and had been at the school previously as Acting Principal.

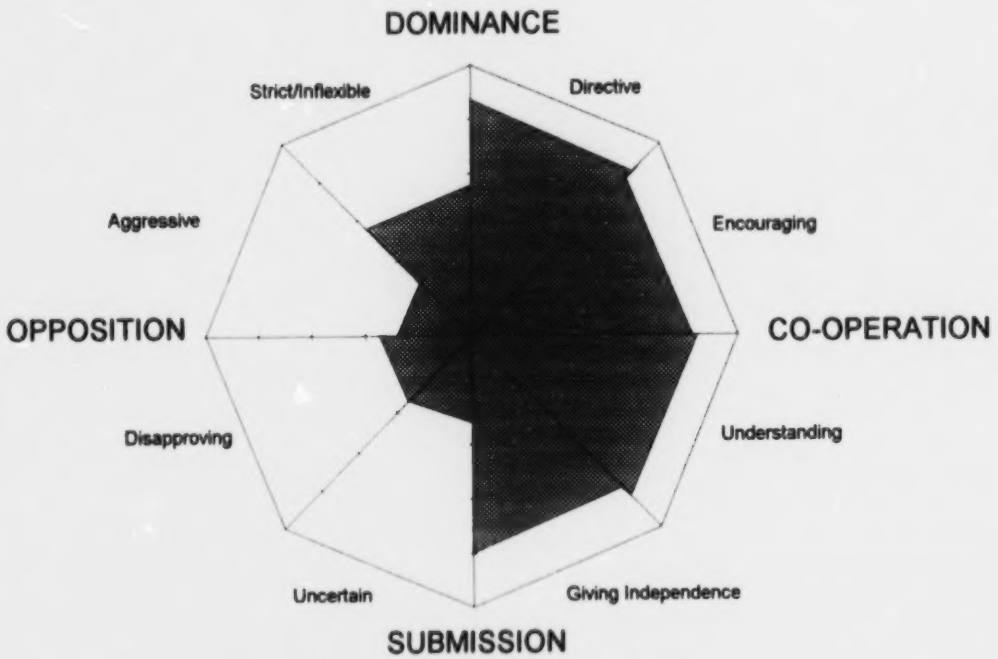

Figure 8. Teachers' actual perceptions of the principal of School Y.

The profile for the teachers' perceptions of the principal's interpersonal behavior at School Y (Figures 8, 9) show that this principal is close to the sample average on the cooperative behaviors and generally shows less opposing behavior than the average principal in the study. The principal saw cooperative behavior as being very important. He was trying to develop teams of teachers and encourage devolution of responsibility - "to make people feel that they have an enormous stake in the running and the success of the school." He saw himself as an "enabler".

The lower than average scores for disapproving and aggressive behavior were seen as a positive by the principal, although Figure 10 shows that the teachers would have preferred a higher degree of disapproving behavior. School Y was one of the very few schools in the study where this was observed. Any disciplining of teachers was done in "absolute private."

As a result of this, the principal felt that, other teachers may perceive him as being not disapproving enough. He said perhaps, he did not discipline people enough, although in a one-to-one situation with a teacher, he was much more likely to be directive. In public he is more cooperative, open to suggestion and seeking advice. This could also account for the slightly higher score on the Uncertainty scale. For example, the school was about to embark on a review system for teachers and he was approaching this with caution and seeking assistance from a number of staff members. In a climate of change he said, "I'm happy to be a little uncertain about some things."

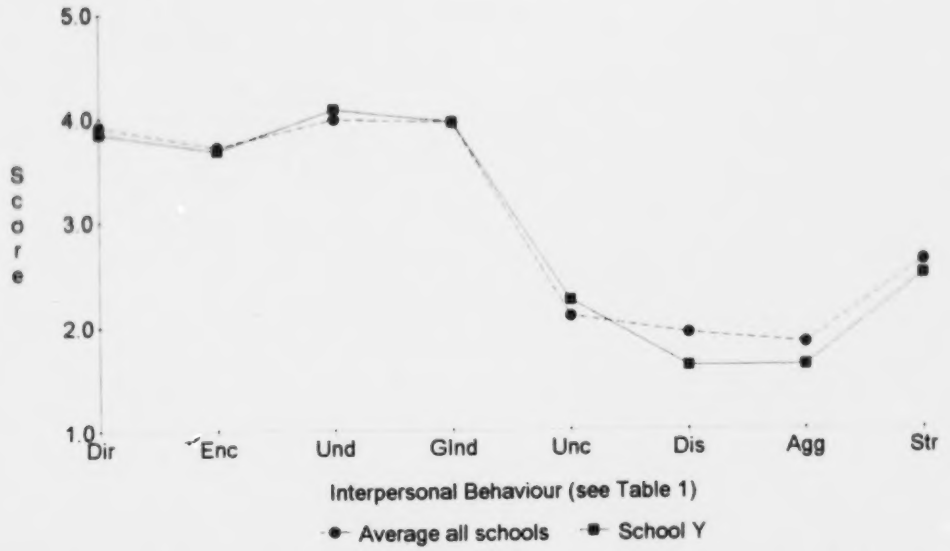

Figure 9. A comparison of teachers' actual perceptions of the principal of School Y and the average perceptions of all principals in the study.

The teachers, in their perceptions of ideal principal interpersonal behavior (Figure 10), would have preferred more directive behavior. This proved to be a dilemma for the principal who believed in a philosophy of team-shared leadership and did not believe in an autocratic approach. He thought that he could be more clear in his directions to staff. A predecessor of his had a highly autocratic approach which actually drew the staff together - perhaps they had a desire to return to that mode of operation. The current principal, however, believed that he could not change his own open style of leadership and concluded that different types of principals are needed in schools at different times of their history.

He said that it takes time to come to grips with the complexity of the role of the principal and that there is a difficulty, sometimes in assessing the general view of the staff. This could be, he surmised, because at staff meetings there is a tendency for one or two to dominate the meeting and their viewpoint will prevail. On the same topic, in a confidential survey, the viewpoint of the whole staff will be revealed to be quite different from the one agreed to in a staff meeting.

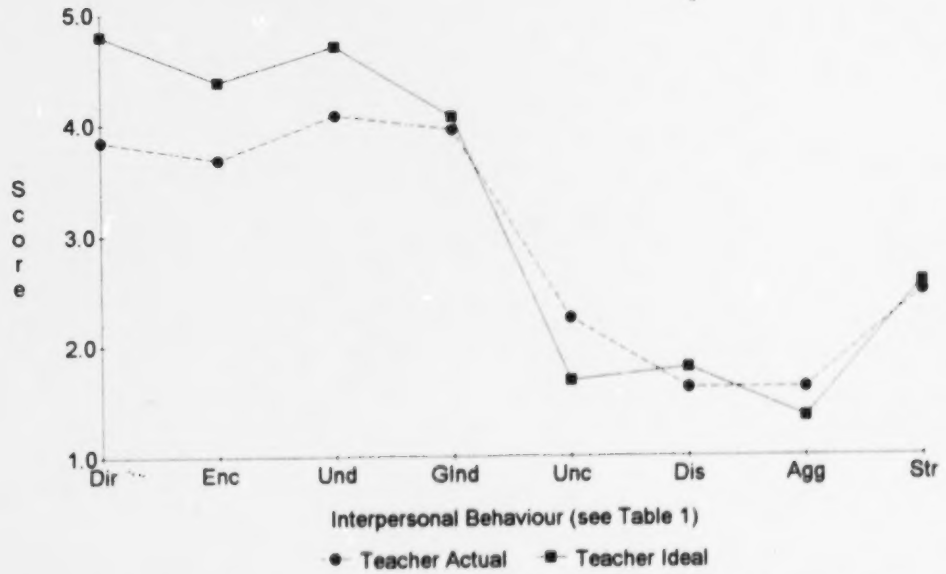

Figure 10. A comparison of teachers' actual perceptions of the principal of School Y and their perceptions of an ideal principal.

The comparison between the teachers' perceptions of the principal of School Y and their perceptions of an ideal principal (Figure 10), also shows that there is a large difference on the Understanding scale on the PIQ. The principal felt that the teachers may have perceived his immediate background, which was not in a school, to be a hindrance to his understanding of their position and problems. His appointment was made with a view to implementing change and correcting some problems which had occurred. He was charged with changing the style of curriculum and its delivery from a strictly academic one to a broader range of subjects and approaches.

An examination of the teachers' perceptions of the environment of School Y, as measured by the SLEQ, shows that the pattern of results is similar to the sample average (Figure 11). The principal thought that the slightly higher than average Student Support figure, reflected excellent teacher-student relationships at the school - a view, he said, that was supported by emergency teachers who came to work in the school.

The fact that the figure for Innovation was slightly less than the average was a result, the principal said, of the very conservative nature of the school and the staff. The school was originally built for about 700 students. When the study took place, there were 1400 students attending. The extra buildings to cope with that increase in students were all temporary structures - some of them had been there for years. Facilities such as the staffrooms were only in the permanent buildings and were, therefore, very crowded. There was a great need to increase the resources in the school in other areas. The teachers perceived a lower Resource Adequacy than the average in the study.

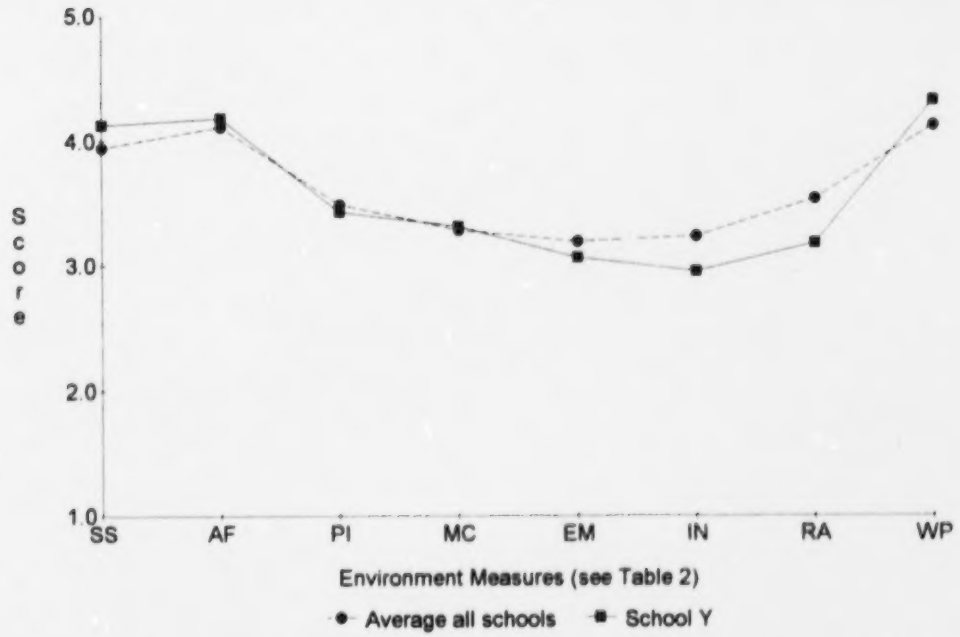

Figure 11. A comparison of teachers' perceptions of the actual school environment of School Y and the average perceptions of all school environments in the study.

Perhaps as a result of this lower Resource Adequacy, and other factors, teachers perceived a higher level of Work Pressure than the average of the other schools in the study. As the principal said:

> A combination of terrible facilities, crowded staffrooms; add to that the change that's being implemented, both externally and internally driven and there's a good case for people to think that they are under a good deal of work pressure.

The principal said that much was being done in order to try to reduce work pressure on the teaching staff. One of the ways that this had been achieved was by installing a new computerised reporting system and employing clerical staff to assist the teachers in the preparation of reports. Subject coordinators had also been given extra time to complete their duties.

He also said that change had been resisted for a long time in the school and that now there really was a back-log of many things to deal with.

School Z

School Z is a boys' school of 850 students. The male principal had been in the position for six years, before which he was a teacher at the school.

The profile of the teachers' perceptions of the principal's interpersonal behavior at School Z (Figure 12) shows that the principal displays less cooperative behavior than the average principal in the sample (Figure 13). On the opposing side of the profile, it can be seen that the teachers perceive the principal, generally, to be displaying more than the average amount of

opposing behavior, especially in the area of disapproving interpersonal behavior, although the amount of strict/inflexible interpersonal behavior is lower than the average.

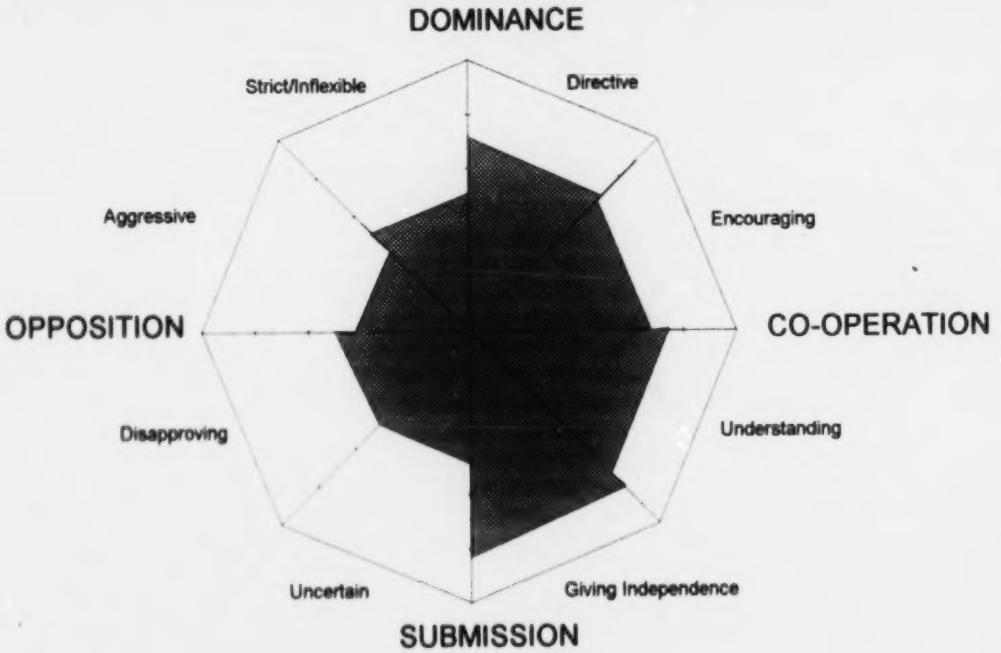

Figure 12. Teachers' actual perceptions of the principal of School Z.

According to the study, teachers at this school were given a slightly higher degree of independence, on the average, than teachers at the other schools. The principal said that this had its good and bad points. When the teachers took on the responsibility fully, some excellent innovation and positive results were obtained. An example was a particular head of department who embraced new technology to take the department into the future. He was given a lot of freedom in the planning and implementation of the innovations and support, where necessary. This change also had a benefit to the staff in that department, whose teaching skills were enhanced through this involvement and through professional development.

The principal said that the weakness of this approach is that conservative, complacent teachers tend to stay that way. He saw his strength in encouraging and supporting, not in ordering or demanding. He thought that sometimes he lacked self-confidence to do this and believed, also, that his energies would reap more rewards if directed in other ways.

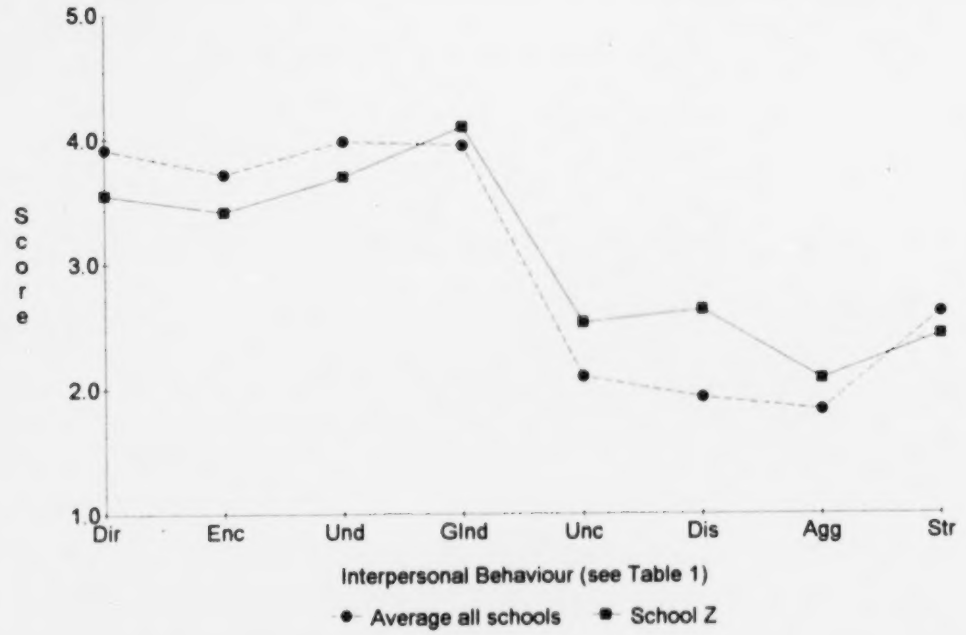

Figure 13. A comparison of teachers' actual perceptions of the principal of School Z and the average perceptions of all principals in the study.

The higher than average score on the Uncertain scale was explained by the fact that there had been a great deal of change in the curriculum area which can lead to a general climate of uncertainty in the school. The principal has tried to empower heads of departments in the design and implementation of many of these changes and so he may appear uncertain to the general staff because he is not giving orders and directions. He believed that, in the long term, most good ideas will come from the teachers at the school and that the principal, like any person, only has a limited number of new good ideas. A leader must discern which of the ideas of the staff are viable and then set up a structure for them to be implemented. He believed that an example of perceived uncertainty at his school was the reorganisation of the area of vocational education, so that some of it is carried out at school and some of it in industry. Some people thought that this programme was messy and indecisive, not clear-cut.

The teachers at School Z perceived a lower degree of strict and inflexible interpersonal behavior than the average. The principal thought that he might be lacking in this area because he was more likely to give gentle reminders and encouragement rather than demanding a strict adherence to rules and regulations. Figure 16 shows that the teachers would have preferred a higher level of strict and inflexible interpersonal behavior from the principal, which was not the case in most of the schools in the study.

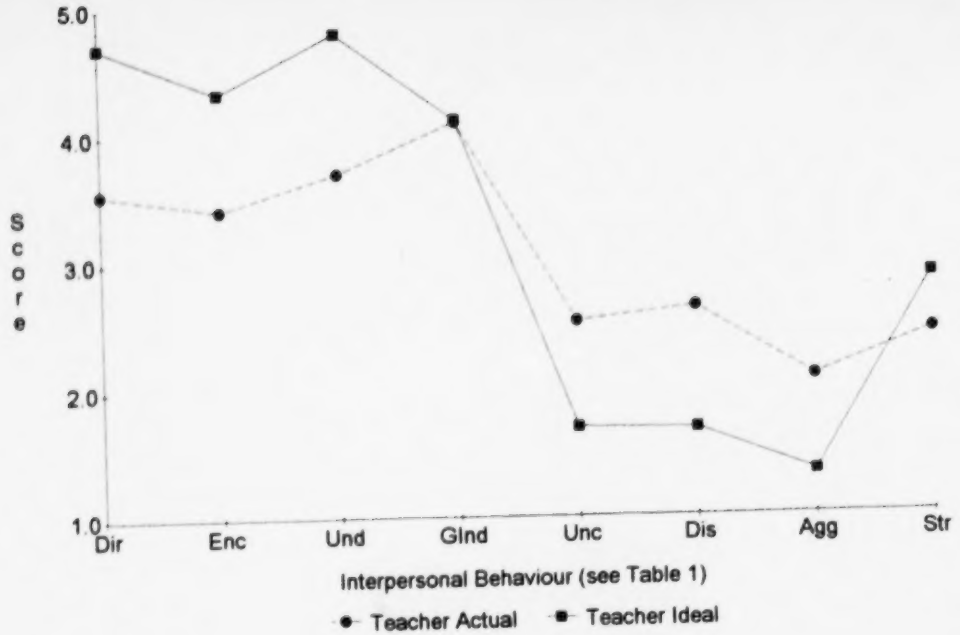

Figure 14. A comparison of teachers' actual perceptions of the principal of School Z and their perceptions of an ideal principal.

The results of the teachers' perceptions of the principal in the area of encouraging and understanding interpersonal behavior were also down on the sample average. He believed that this may have been because of the way that he handled difficult children. He was very reluctant to suspend or expel students if there was any small sign that the student would improve. This reluctance was sometimes in the face of direct opposition to the teachers' view that the student should be excluded from the school. In this way, he thought that the teachers would perceive him not to be very understanding.

He also believed that teachers with discipline problems must have a commitment to solving those problems themselves. This may be construed as a lack of support and understanding, when it is more a desire that teachers develop solutions and effective methodologies of their own.

He thought that staff have a better understanding of the problems, when they move into leadership positions that brings them into contact with a wider range of people, including parents. He suggested that it would be a good idea to cycle people through different positions at the school.

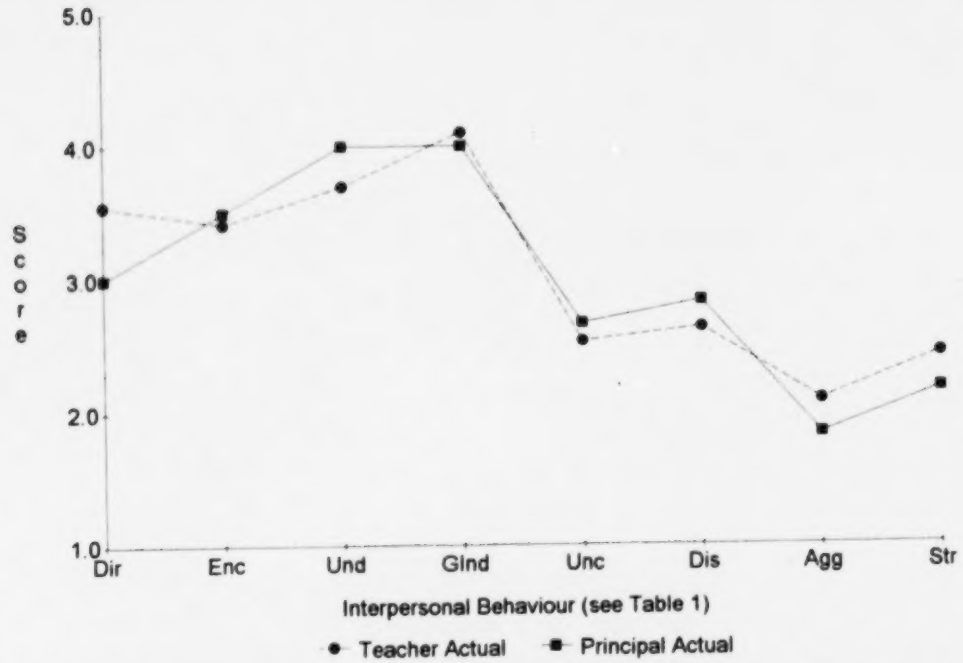

Figure 15. A comparison of teachers' actual perceptions of the principal of School Z and the principal's self-appraisal.

The principal found the comparison of his perceptions with the teachers' perceptions to be most interesting. He noted that there was a similarity between his own perceptions and that of the teachers', with regard to his own interpersonal behavior. Although the teachers had perceived the principal to display less directive interpersonal behavior than the average, the principal himself, perceived an even lower level. The principal thought that he had a good feel for the way that the staff felt.

When considering the results of the school environment questionnaire (Figure 16) it can be seen that School Z is similar to most schools in the study except for a lower than average reading for Student Support and Work Pressure, and a higher reading for Resource Adequacy. This is an unusual combination of results compared with the other schools in the study. With regard to Student Support, the principal said that there had recently been a restructuring of the school to provide improved pastoral care and the opportunity for the students to develop better relationships and a greater sense of support for each other. The principal was interested to compare these results with those of other boys' schools.

The teachers perceived the school to have a higher level of Resource Adequacy than the average. This, the principal said, was the result of a great deal of persistence and work.

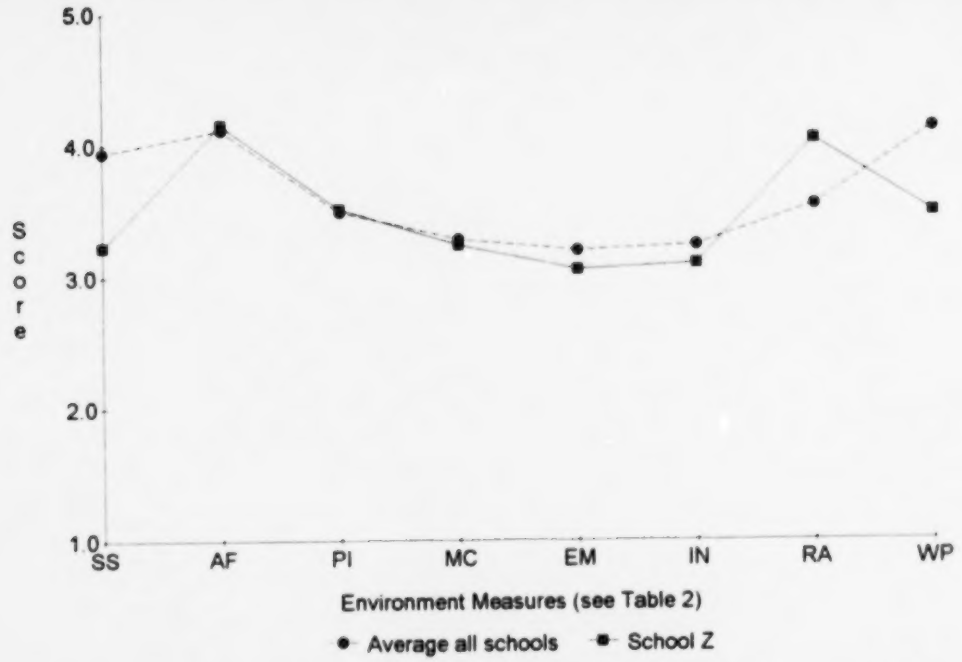

Figure 16. A comparison of teachers' perceptions of the actual school environment of School Z and the average perceptions of all school environments in the study.

The Work Pressure scale showed a lower result than the average for the other schools in the sample. The principal believed that the staff were treated very well in terms of leave for medical and personal reasons. Class sizes were relatively small and staff were given pupil-free days following examination sessions, to allow them to complete their marking and write their reports. The principal said that it was increasingly difficult to find staff to participate in extra-curricular activities, although he coached a cricket team himself.

When comparing the teachers' actual and ideal perceptions of school environment (Figure 17), it can be seen that the teachers would have preferred a higher level of cooperative interpersonal behavior by the principal and a lower level of opposing interpersonal behavior. The principal said that he was probably appointed to the position when he was too young and did not have sufficient experience. He said that he struggled for the first five years just to understand the basic requirements of the position. It was also a very difficult time for the school which was suffering from declining enrolments and economic constraints were threatening to cause redundancies. Added to that the school was suffering trauma as a result of a student's suicide. The principal said plainly that those years were extremely hard and perhaps he was, only now, coming to grips with the role.

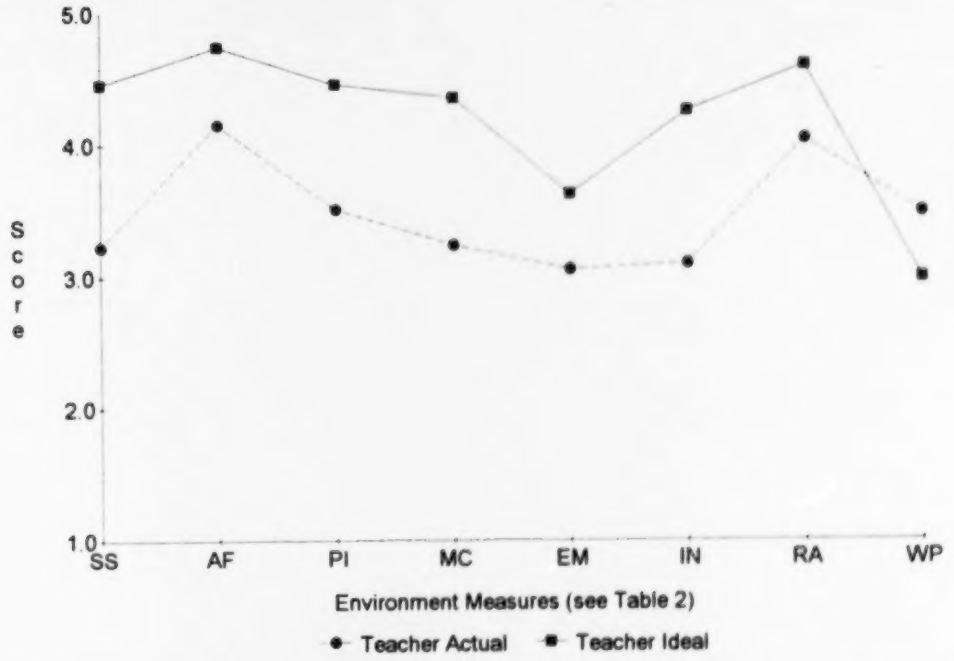

Figure 17. A comparison of teachers' perceptions of the actual school environment of School Z and their perceptions of an ideal School environment.

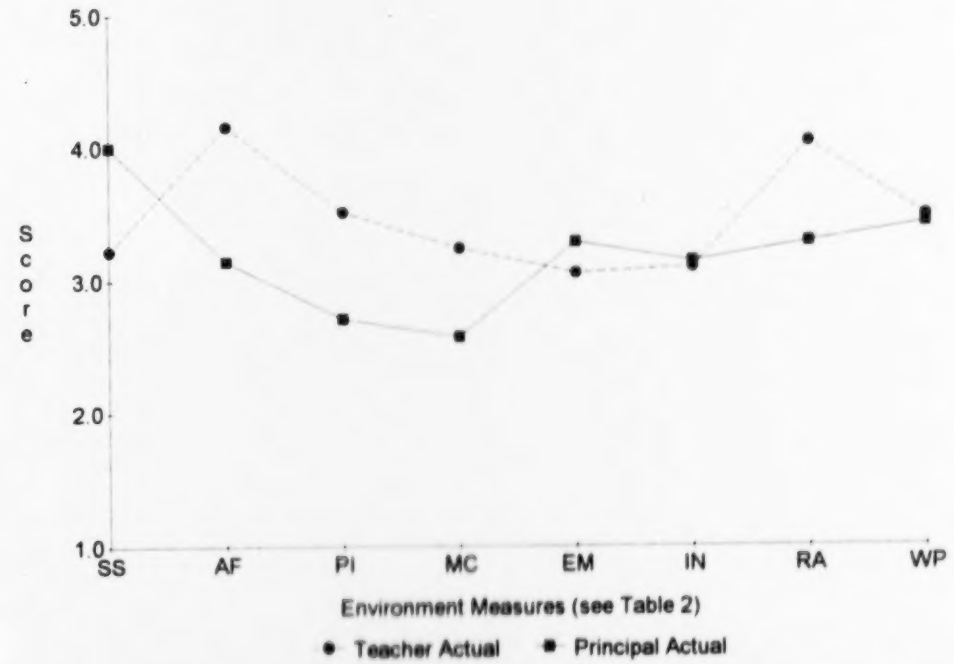

Figure 18. A comparison of teachers' perceptions of the actual school environment of School Z and the principal's perceptions of the school environment.

When comparing the teachers' perceptions of school environment with his own perception, he observed that, generally, the teachers had a more favourable view of the school. The teachers perceived that the Resource Adequacy of the school was quite high compared with the principal's perception. This was the reverse to most other schools in the study. The principal suggested that this might be because he has the opportunity to visit other schools much more often than the teachers do. He believed that, in comparison with the other schools, his school was not nearly so well resourced.

There was a difference in perceptions between the principal and the teachers in the area of Mission Consensus. This school has a religious base and the principal thought that his sense of mission was, probably, not the same as the majority of the teachers. He felt that most of the staff would relate to a mission that was based on educational principles, whereas his was based on religious principles. He felt that the staff were not worried by this difference.

When asked what type of leader he saw himself as, the principal said that he was like a bishop with a crook that had a sharp point at one end a large hook at the other - he had to prod some people into action and he had to pull some people back from the actions they were taking. He also referred to the multi-faceted nature of the principal's role - the manager, financial expert, architect, educationalist, leader and disciplinarian.

Overall, the principal was not surprised by the results - he expected that the staff would say that he did not lead strongly enough. He summarised by saying that what he did best was to concentrate on people's strengths, not their weaknesses.

Conclusions

This paper has described, in detail, the results obtained from three of the 56 schools that participated in the study. The extra detail was provided by the principals of those three schools, who agreed to be interviewed. The main aim of the interviews was to compare the statistical findings of the questionnaire with the impressions of the principals. The principals were also asked general questions about their leadership styles and experiences, to gain a broader view of the school.

According to the principals, there was general agreement between the statistical results and their own perceptions. The Principal Interaction Questionnaire, therefore, was able to describe, fairly accurately, the interpersonal behavior of the principal as perceived by the teachers in the school. By integrating results from the PIQ, the SLEQ and the interviews with the principals, a detailed description of each of the schools emerged.

The three schools were chosen to give a cross-section of results from a selection of diverse schools. There were single sex schools, co-educational schools and principals of different gender and experience. Some of the schools' results could be viewed as "favourable", while at least one of the schools' results might be regarded as "unfavourable". The sharing of strategies for success and the common problems perceived, should be of assistance to current and aspiring principals.

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